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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by World Family Organization, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

"Families in balance": the Istanbul Declaration World Family Summit +5

We, ministers and representatives of Governments, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, parliamentarians, private sector, media and families, 300 participants from 54 countries representing all continents, participating in the World Family Summit +5, having accomplished the agenda with fruitful discussions in all plenary sessions:

- Having considered the theme to be discussed at the 2010 annual ministerial review (Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women) and the theme of the Development Cooperation Forum.

- Recalling the outcomes of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 1975; the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, 1980; the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, Nairobi, 1985; the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995; the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +5), New York, 2000; and the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, held during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2005.

- Noting the outcomes of the preparation and celebration of the International Year of the Family, 1994; and the outcomes of the panel discussion at the United Nations in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2004.

- Recalling the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, held in 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted and the commitments made by nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, and setting out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015, known as the Millennium Development Goals.

- Considering the recommendations and the declarations from the World Family Summit, Sanya, China, 2004; World Family Summit +1, Aracaju, Brazil, 2005; World Family Summit +2, Dead Sea, 2006; World Family Summit +3, Warsaw, 2007; and the World Family Summit +4, Cairo, 2008.

- Taking into account the 15-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +15), New York, March 2010.

- Recognizing that reducing inequality and empowering women are very powerful tools to reduce poverty and achieve high levels of well-being of families in all cultures and societies around the world.

- Recognizing that gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched attitudes, societal institutions and market forces, therefore, political commitments at the

highest international and national levels, and especially, actions at the local level are essential.

- Affirming that political commitments can allow the adequate establishment of policies that can target social changes and the allocation of the necessary resources to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women.

- Recognizing that gender is a social construct defining and differentiating the roles, rights, power, responsibilities and obligations of women and men, forming the basis of social norms that define behaviours for women and men and determine their social, economic and political power.

- Concerned that many obstacles, especially violence against women, prevent the achievement of equality, development and peace as recognized in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

- Convinced that a document presented by the United Nations task force on Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals reflects the real need for a "Goal 3 plus approach".

- Welcoming the results and recommendations of the plenary sessions held at the World Family Summit +5 on the seven strategies mentioned in the document presented by the United Nations task force on Goal 3.

We adopted the following declaration:

- Achieving gender equality and empowering women is a problem that has solutions, and there is no better space than the family to start the dialogue about these solutions.

There are many practical steps that can reduce inequalities based on gender, which restrict the potential to reduce poverty and achieve high levels of well-being of the family in societies all over the world. Leadership and political will are the first and most important steps to be taken to achieve Goal 3. Because gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched attitudes, political commitment at the highest international, national, regional, local and family levels is essential to establish and implement policies that can trigger social changes.

We all agree that it is imperative to allocate adequate resources for gender equality and women's empowerment at the international, national, regional and local levels and to guarantee that the next decade will provide new and wider opportunities to take action globally to achieve gender equality and empower women, essentially to strengthen the family and meet all the Millennium Development Goals. We also agree that it is essential to promote a deep transformation in the way societies conceive and organize men's and women's roles and responsibilities, access to resources and control over them.

It is a common agreement of the delegates that, to ensure the achievement of the "Goal 3 plus approach" by 2015, there are seven interdependent priorities to empower women and alter the historical legacy and female disadvantage that remain in the family and in most societies of the world:

- Education. While sustaining the commitment to equal access to universal primary education for boys and girls, it is also essential to strengthen opportunities to access post-primary education. Evidence suggests that secondary and higher levels of education have the greatest pay-off for

women's empowerment, including increased income-earning potential, the ability to bargain for resources within the household, decision-making autonomy, control over fertility, participation in public life and strengthening the family.

- Reproductive health, rights and sexual education. Without guaranteed reproductive health and sexual education for girls, boys, women and men, the "Goal 3 plus approach" cannot be achieved. Reproductive and sexual health and rights are central to women's ability to build their capabilities inside the family and take advantage of economic and political opportunities and an effective control of their destiny. The implementation of efficient and effective public services in these areas, especially at the local level and in the family, is strategic for achieving gender equality and empowering women.

- Infrastructure. The lack of appropriate basic infrastructure, such as transport systems, water and sanitation, energy systems and nursery systems, as well as of sharing the household division of labour assignments and the responsibility of daily maintenance tasks, limits gender equality and the empowerment of women. Increasing women's participation in the design and implementation of family-oriented infrastructure policies and projects will certainly help to overcome gender equality obstacles.

- Property and inheritance rights. Ensuring that women have property and inheritance rights empowers women both economically and socially, and rectifies a fundamental injustice. Secure tenure of land and home improves women's welfare and provides economic security and incentives for taking economic risks that lead to growth and important economic returns, including income. Equal land rights improve women's rights to credit, strengthening the assets of the family.

- Employment. Gender inequality exists in entering the workforce, conditions at work and exiting the labour market. Women's work, both paid and unpaid, is critical for the survival and security of the family and an important route through which families escape from poverty. It is also critical for women's empowerment. The expansion of national policies and programmes supporting the elimination of inequality in labour legislation and the labour market, gaps in earning and unemployment, encompassing the implementation of the Decent Work initiative in rights, protection and dialogue, will promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The expansion of national policies and programmes to provide support for the care of children, people with disabilities and the elderly is an important intervention to enable women and men to participate equally in paid employment, empower women and the family and reinforce the role of men in family life, to allow reconciliation between professional and family responsibilities.

- Participation in national parliaments and local governmental bodies. Equality of opportunity in politics is a human right. Lack of women's participation in political bodies and decision-making makes societies less inclusive, less equalitarian and less democratic. Strengthening women's direct participation in decision-making bodies improves quality of governance and is an important condition to improve family-focused policy formulation in economic, social and political fields. Gender parity in parliaments (elected or nominated), and

in national, regional and local governmental bodies empowers women and improves the quality of public services delivered to families.

- Domestic violence. Gender inequality perpetuates violence against women, and violence against women restricts women's ability to use their capabilities. The economic, social and health-related costs of domestic violence and violence against women are extremely high. We recognize that the scale and complexity of gender-based violence means there is no uniform global solution; a multisectorial strategy is needed. National, local and family interventions and initiatives play an important role in defining solutions. Combating domestic violence is one of the most relevant instruments to achieve the "Goal 3 plus approach".

Recognizing all the above-mentioned affirmations, we, the delegates to the World Family Summit +5, commit ourselves to promote practical actions that can be taken within each of the above-mentioned strategies to bring about gender equality and empowerment of women and the strengthening of the family by:

- Promoting political commitment to mobilize a large group of change agents at different levels within countries and international, national, regional and local institutions who seek to implement a vision of the world
- Ensuring technical capacity to implement change
- Empowering institutional structures and processes to support the transformation, including structures that enable women and men to successfully claim their rights
- Demanding adequate financial resources to sustain the implementation of change
- Demanding accountability and monitoring systems to ensure that fundamental changes are broad-based and lasting

We express our unwavering resolve to implement the present declaration.